



Leave Me Alone!

How to Slow the Flow of Unwanted Communications

CONSUMER INFORMATION SHEET 5

Many people today feel overwhelmed by the volume of sales offers they receive at home. You may not be able to completely stop the flow of telephone, fax, mail, or email solicitations, but you can reduce it. You can avoid getting on some marketing lists in the first place. And you can take steps to get off many of the lists you are already on.

Staying Off Marketing Lists

- ❑ Do not fill out consumer surveys or marketing surveys.
- ❑ Do not fill out surveys attached to product "warranty registration cards." You do not have to complete and return the cards to enjoy your warranty rights.¹
- ❑ Do not fill out sweepstakes entry forms.
- ❑ When you give money to a charity or other group, enclose a note asking them not to share, sell or rent your name to any other organization. Do the same when you order from a catalog.
- ❑ Exercise your opt-out rights wherever you can. Your financial institutions are required to notify you of your right to stop them from sharing your personal financial information with outside companies.² Read the privacy policies of web sites. They often give you an opportunity to opt out of receiving email ads or of having your information shared with other companies.

Telemarketing Calls

- ❑ Tell telemarketers who call you to put you on their do-not-call list. You can also ask to be put on the do-not-call lists of their affiliated companies.³
- ❑ Californians will soon be able to list their home and cell phones on either a state or national do-not-call list. For more information, check with the California Attorney General's Office at (800) 952-5225. Or online at <http://caag.state.ca.us/donotcall/index.htm>.
- ❑ Watch out for do-not-call scams and identity thieves. They may try to steal personal information under the guise of a state do-not-call program.
- ❑ Until the state list is ready, sign up for the Direct Marketing Association's Telephone Preference Service. This is a voluntary industry-sponsored program. It will not stop all telemarketing calls. Register online for \$5 at www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offtelephoned ave. Or sign up for free by writing to Telephone Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 1559 Carmel, NY 10512. It's good for five years.



Telemarketing (continued)

- ❑ For more information on reducing telemarketing calls, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 5 at www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs5-tmkt.htm, EPIC's information at www.epic.org/privacy/telemarketing, and Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/telemarketing.html

Junk Mail

- ❑ Sign up for the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service. In three to four months, you should receive less junk mail. This is a voluntary industry program. It will not stop all junk mail. The service costs \$5 online at www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglistdave. It is available for free by writing to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 643 Carmel, NY 10512. It's good for five years.
- ❑ Call 888-5OPTOUT to stop most unsolicited pre-approved credit offers. This is good for two years. To make it permanent, write to Opt-Out Department, P.O. Box 24025, Seattle, WA 98124-0025. Send your full name, current home address, previous home address and Social Security number. Sign and date your letter.
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk mail, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 4 at www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility's tips at www.cpsr.org/cpsr/privacy/junkmail.html, or Junkbusters' tips at www.junkbusters.com/junkmail.html

Junk Faxes

- ❑ Federal law bans the sending of commercial faxes without first getting the consent of the receiver. All such faxes must include time and date sent, and the phone number of the sending fax machine.⁴
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk faxes, see Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/fax.html.

Spam or Junk Email

- ❑ Never respond to spam. Never buy anything advertised in spam. Protect your email address like other personal information. Do not post your email address on your Web site. Use a separate email address for newsgroups.
- ❑ Register with the Direct Marketing Association's e-Mail Preference Service at www.dmaconsumers.org/offemaillist.html. It's free and it's good for two years. This is a voluntary industry program that will not stop all junk email.
- ❑ California law requires senders of unsolicited email ads to include ADV in the subject line and to provide a valid return email address or toll-free phone number to allow consumers to stop future emails.⁵ The California Attorney General's Office is looking for examples of spam e-mails sent to consumers in violation of California law. For more information, see <http://caag.state.ca.us/spam/index.htm>.
- ❑ For more tips on controlling spam, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 20 (Anti-Spam Resources) at www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs20-spam.htm, Computer Professionals for Social



Spam (continued)

Responsibility's spam page at www.cpsr.org/program/privacy/spam.html, or Junkbusters' tips, including how to track down spammers and sample letters, at www.junkbusters.com/junkemail.html

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NOTES

¹California Civil Code Section 1793.1(a)(1) requires a warranty or product registration card to contain a statement that failure to complete and return the card does not diminish a consumer's warranty rights. For text of the law, go to www.privacy.ca.gov/code/cc1793.1.htm

² For more information, see the Financial Privacy page on the Office of Privacy Protection web site at www.privacy.ca.gov/financial.htm

³The TCPA, cited above.

⁴ The federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), 47 U.S.C. § 227, requires telemarketers to take you off their list when you ask them to. The Act is available at www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/47/227.html.

⁵ California Business and Professions Code Section 17538.4. Additionally Business and Professions Code Section 17538.45 gives an email service provider the right to sue those who send unsolicited commercial email from its network or to its subscribers. Penal Code Section 502(c)(9) adds the unauthorized use of domain names ("email spoofing") to the Computer Crimes Act, with criminal penalties and private right of action. For the text of the spam laws, go to the Privacy Laws page on the Office of Privacy Protection web site at www.privacy.ca.gov/spam_laws.htm